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ABSTRACT

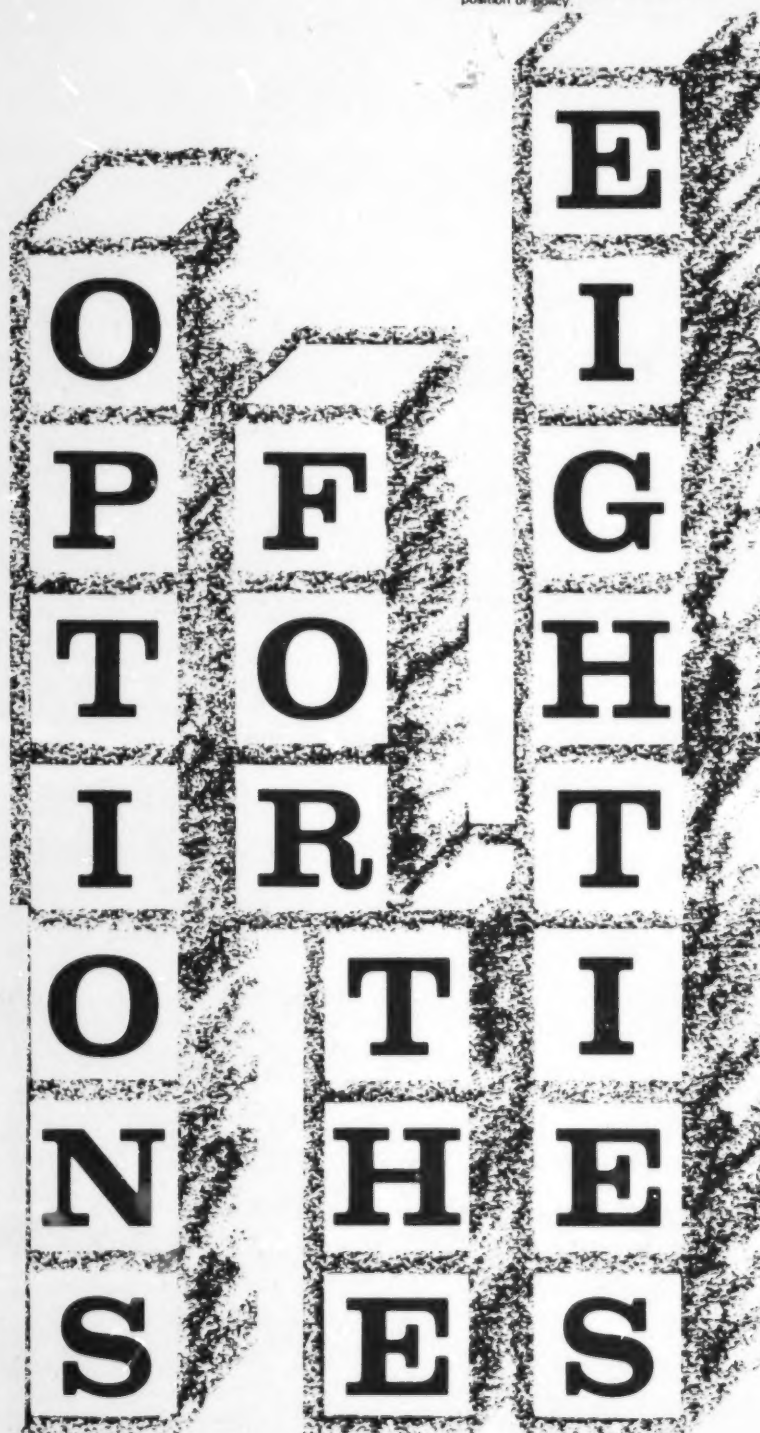
Child care is one of the six focus areas of the child advocacy program established in 1975 by the Association of Junior Leagues to ensure that children and their families have access to the services and opportunities necessary for growth and development. Participants in the Association's "Child Care: Options for the 80's" conference included 19 child-care experts from academia, government, the corporate sector, and private agencies, as well as representatives of 16 Junior Leagues concerned with child care in their communities, and representatives of the Association. They examined the significant policies and developments in child care during the past decade and identified the major trends and issues expected to affect child care in the 1980s. This report provides the opening address, "Child Care: Trends and Issues," by Sheila B. Kamerman, and summaries of nine presentations focusing on infant and toddler child care, preschool programs, care for school-age children, information and referral services, and financing and delivery of services. At the conclusion of the conference, participants drafted an agenda for action, identifying five major issues and the strategies needed to address them. Findings and recommendations reached at the conference provide the basis for future public policy actions by the Association and individual Junior Leagues relating to child care. A list of participants concludes the report. (RH)

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Child Care Options for the 80's

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The Association of Junior Leagues is an international women's volunteer organization with 340 member Leagues in the United States, representing approximately 140,000 individual members. Junior Leagues promote the solution of community problems through voluntary citizen involvement and train their members to be effective voluntary participants in their communities.

Junior Leagues work to improve their communities through more than 1000 projects in 80 different subject categories, such as child welfare, family services, health, education, urban revitalization, the arts, and the environment.

Introduction

The Association of Junior Leagues, in cooperation with The Johnson Foundation, and with the assistance of the Foundation for Child Development, held a conference on "Child Care: Options for the 80's" February 11-13, 1982 at Wingspread, headquarters of The Johnson Foundation in Racine, Wisconsin.

The conference was one of several events focused on matters of national interest and importance to women and children held as part of the Association's celebration of the 60th anniversary of its incorporation as an international women's voluntary organization.

Child care is one of the six focus areas of the child advocacy program which the Association established in 1975 to ensure that children and their families have access to the services and opportunities necessary for growth and development.

The other focus areas of the Association's child advocacy program are: child health, child welfare (including foster care, adoption, child abuse and neglect), substance abuse, special education, and juvenile justice. Activities of the program include legislative action on the national and local levels as well as sponsorship by the Junior Leagues of hundreds of service projects for children.

Participants included 19 child-care experts from academia, government, the corporate sector, and private agencies, as well as representatives of 16 Junior Leagues concerned with child care in their communities, and representatives of the Association. They examined the significant policies and developments in child care during the past decade and identified the major trends and issues expected to affect child care in the 1980s.

At the conclusion of the conference, the participants drafted an agenda for action, identifying five major issues and the strategies needed to address them. That agenda, as well as summaries of the major presentations at the conference, are included in this report.

The findings and recommendations reached at the Wingspread Conference will provide the basis for future public policy actions taken by the Association and individual Junior Leagues relating to child care.

Child Care: Trends and Issues



"We are talking about a social revolution in the ways in which children are being reared."

Opening Address

Sheila B. Kamerman, D.S.W.

**Professor, Social Policy and Planning
Columbia University School of Social Work**

Despite numerous efforts to downplay its importance, child care—its availability, affordability and quality—is an issue that refuses to disappear. There are those who say that enough child-care places exist for all who want such a service; that most parents use, and prefer, a relative or neighbor to care for their children while they are at work; and that, even if more is needed or wanted in the way of out-of-home child-care services, government does not belong in the child-care business.

These allegations fall apart when measured against the actual experiences and statements of real parents. In survey after survey, working parents, especially mothers, reiterate that the single most important problem they face in managing their work and family lives is child care. If anything, the child-care issue has become more important than ever, to more parents, over the past decade. However, in the debate, the issues and options have changed since the early 1970s. What follows is an overview of the changes that have occurred in child care and a summary of current trends and issues facing us in the early 1980s.

Some Changes in the Lives of Children

First let's take a look at some of the differences that have occurred in children's lives since 1970.

There are fewer children—about 14 percent fewer under the age of 18 and about 10 percent fewer under the age of six.

More children are living in single-parent families. There has been about an 80 percent increase in the proportion of children living in such families. This means that about one-fifth of all children today live in one-parent families and one-half of the children born since the mid-1970s will live in a single-parent family for some time before they are 18.

Of particular importance, when we talk about changes in children's lives, is the fact that far more children today than in 1970 are living in families with working parents—two working parents or a single working parent. In 1970, less than 38 percent of children under 18 had mothers who were in the labor force; in 1981, that figure was 54 percent. In 1970, 28 percent of children under the age of six had working mothers; in 1981, that figure was 45 percent. Nor was this change caused primarily by an increase in single-parent families. In 1981, 49 percent of all women with children under the age of six were in the labor force, including 48 percent of married mothers and 54 percent of single mothers. In all probability, by next year we will have passed the point at which over half of the mothers with children under the age of six will be working. We are approaching the time when most children under six—like those above that age now—will have working mothers.

The increase in working mothers with very young children—those under age three—is especially dramatic. Until 1975, the census bureau did not report labor force data concerning mothers of children under age three because the assumption was that few such mothers worked. By 1981, about 47 percent of the mothers of children under age three were working. In fact, close to 40 percent of mothers with children between the ages of six months and one year were in the labor force, too!

What we are discussing is not an issue for just a small percentage of the American population. It is, instead, a concern of most parents, and most children. What we are talking about is, in fact, a social revolution in the ways in which children are being reared and families are functioning.

Values as well as lifestyles have changed. So have attitudes toward work and family roles. Women now constitute an impressive and essential 43 percent of the total labor force. This development has come about because of a number of economic and other factors. For example, the marked inflation which we have experienced over the past decade has meant that, for family income to be adequate, two wage earners are needed, not just one. Moreover, the

growth in the service sector in the 1960s and 1970s has provided a greater number of jobs for women.

Significant Developments in the 1970s

The pattern in financing and delivering of child-care services that emerged in the 1970s also can be traced to demographic and policy developments.

- The number of children in federally-funded day-care programs increased from about 300,000 in 1971 to about 1.8 million in 1978.
- Nursery school enrollment just about doubled over the decade from one to two million. About two-thirds of the children aged three to five attend some form of group program now, largely pre-school. Most programs are private and many are only part-day.
- A federal child-care tax credit was passed in 1976, and was increased somewhat in 1981. It provides a partial subsidy for the child-care expenses of working parents and is of value to middle- and upper-class families primarily. It is of no value to those families whose incomes are so low they do not owe any income taxes and so, therefore, are not eligible to receive a credit.
- The Pregnancy Discrimination Act was passed in 1978. This legislation requires employers who provide sickness or disability benefits to qualified employees to include pregnancy and maternity as qualifying conditions, providing partial income protection at that time. However, nothing in this legislation requires employers to provide such benefits, and the majority of working women still do not have such coverage.
- A dependent-care assistance benefit permitting employers to provide or sponsor child-care services in a variety of ways for their employees without it being counted as a form of taxable income to the employee was also enacted as part of the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981.
- Two other developments during the decade were the rapid expansion of for-profit child-care services in the latter half of the 1970s and the emerging interest in infant and toddler child-care services.

The Major Issues in the 1970s

Before discussing the policy issues of the 1980s, let's briefly review what the issues were in the early 1970s. The number one

question in the early 1970s was: Is day care harmful? Will my child be harmed if I put him or her in a child-care center? Other questions included:

- Should the kind of child care provided be developmental or custodial?
- Should child care be controlled by educational or social welfare auspices?
- Is it a school program, or a social service?
- Are for-profit child-care centers safe for my child?
- What kinds of standards should prevail, and how should they be enforced?
- Knowing the value of parents' participation in the arrangements for their children's care, how can such participation be facilitated?
- Do we really need publicly-subsidized child-care services? Aren't there enough places already?

In the course of the decade, we discovered that parents view themselves as caring for their children, even when they are not with them every minute of the day. We discovered that probably the most important child-care institution outside of the family is the school and that a surprising number of three-, four- and five-year-olds were already in some kind of a pre-school program for at least part of their parents' work day. We also discovered that, for many parents, "child care" is not one kind of care, but often a complicated amalgam of group care and family day care and relative care, depending on what is available.

Finally, we discovered that when you start worrying about what parents' preferences are, you also have to begin to understand how parents express their concerns and anxieties about their children and what they are doing. That is, if you ask parents—"Are you satisfied with the kind of care you now are using for your child?"—in the vast majority of cases a parent will say—"Yes, I am satisfied..." After probing that kind of response, we finally learned that, for parents to be comfortable with the arrangements they make, many will say they are

satisfied with what they have even though subsequent discussion (when they have different, better care arrangements) will suggest otherwise.

Trends and Issues of the 80's

Now, what are the trends and issues for the 1980s?

First of all, the term "day care," meaning federally-funded programs labelled "day care," is too narrow. Most prefer the term "child care" because it implies any of a diversity of arrangements.

Child care can be in-home care by a relative, a non-relative, or by a parent (some parents work different shifts in order to take care of their children themselves). Out-of-home care may be provided by a relative or by a non-relative in their home; the latter is usually described as family day care and ranges from informal "babysitting" to licensed care provided by someone who is part of a satellite network, related to a local pre-school program. In addition, there are other types of group care, sometimes called day care, or nursery school, or pre-kindergarten, or Head Start, or play school, or child development center. All of these services can be paid for in a variety of different ways including public monies, directly (e.g., Title XX Social Services Block Grant) or indirectly (e.g., tax credit), fully or partially.

However, the method of payment does not by itself distinguish the type of child care. The major difference has to do with whether the care is provided in one's own home, in someone else's home, or in a group facility. People use different types of care depending on the age of their child, the type of care available, the cost of care, and on their particular preferences. Age of child, availability of care and cost generally are the most important factors in determining the type of care that is used.

One issue to be considered is: do we expand the amount of care that is available so that people can use the type of care they prefer at a cost that they can afford?

A second trend is that the "who" that is being cared for is very different than it once was. In the early 1970s, when people were talking about child care, they meant

children between the ages of three and six. Little attention was paid to care of primary-school-age children when school is closed, before and after school hours, or during school vacations. Still less attention was paid to care for very young children. Now we are talking about care for infants, toddlers, pre-school-age and primary-school-age children when school is not in session.

Care Varies With Child's Age

Here the issue is: what types of care are available for children of different ages? Which types of care do parents prefer for children of different ages?

Third, parents are no longer willing to choose between "custodial" and "developmental" care. Parents want good quality care for their children—the kind of child care that they believe will enhance their child's development. Today we know that out-of-home care is not, by definition, harmful to children; good child-care programs can be good for children. However, we are not always clear about the criteria for good care. More importantly, we do not know what the consequences are of not-so-good care, let alone bad care; and there is a fair amount of care that may not be so good.

The issue here is: Is good care affordable for everybody and for every child? If it is not, what can we do about it?

Fourth, parent participation continues to be viewed as important, but it is defined more broadly than it once was. Not every parent is going to have either the time or the inclination to be actively involved with his or her child-care program. There are different ways in which participation gets played out, depending to a large extent on what it is that different parents want and how they view their roles.

One issue pertaining to parent participation is: how can parents learn to assess what is a good quality child-care program, what is not so good, and what is bad? How can parents learn to make choices with which they can be comfortable?

Fifth, providers, policymakers and child-care advocates have not yet resolved the long-standing debate as to whether child-care services should be viewed as an educational program or as a social welfare program. Parents, however, no longer see this as a problem. For a number of parents, child care means a school-based program for pre-schoolers and for primary-school-age children after school hours. However, parental preferences vary for very young children. In fact, the largest proportion of family day care is used for children under the age of three, although we are unclear whether parents prefer this type of care or that is all that is available. Regardless, the conflict continues to exist among providers and policymakers, especially within state governmental agencies, where part of the problem has to do with such factors as the existence of different types of agencies, different sets of regulations, and different types of licensing. Costs of teachers' salaries and support services also influence the choice of auspice. However, there is nothing especially sacrosanct about age six for starting school, either. Some countries begin school when a child is seven, and some begin when a child is five. Almost every continental European country provides public, free, and voluntary pre-school education for children from about the age of two or three up. Some states are now beginning to explore the possibility of lowering the age of pre-school programs. We need to examine this option further.

The issue is whether or not public schools should be encouraged to expand their provision of child-care services by extending the school day for school-age children and by providing pre-school programs to younger children. If so, how can this be done?

Sixth, a new auspice for child care has recently emerged on the scene: employer-sponsored child care. Thus, among the issues related to auspice and sponsorship are: what is the role of the employer in providing or sponsoring child care? Where do the for-profit providers fit in the child-care picture, and how can we ensure that quality care will be provided by for-profit child-care facilities? How can such groups as well as

church groups, community agencies, employers, and others work together in expanding the supply of good child care?

Seventh, there has been a substantial growth in the numbers of child-care information and referral services over the decade. Although these programs provide a very important service, we need to remember that such services can be successful only if there is enough child care available.

We also need to explore the relationship between paid and job-protected maternity leaves and infant day care. The need, or demand for, infant day care has a direct relationship to the extent to which paid maternity leave for employed women exists. Only five states in this country provide temporary disability insurance covering pregnancy and maternity leave. At present, more and more young mothers with young infants are going back to work within the first few months after their child is born because they need the income. One issue is: what kinds of care are these mothers using? If they received paid maternity leave would they prefer to stay at home?

From a somewhat different perspective: what kinds of choices will states make when funds are cut back further? In effect, the Title XX Social Services Block Grant was cut back to \$2.4 billion this year, and President Reagan now is proposing to cut it back to \$1.9 billion in the next fiscal year. If more cutbacks are enacted, what will be the consequences for child-care services? What are the approaches, and the responses, that are going to be taken by states and child-care providers with regard to these cutbacks? The same questions hold true in terms of cutbacks for Head Start, elementary and secondary education and a variety of other kinds of federally-funded programs that relate to child care.

Demand for Child Care Increases

Regardless of one's view of need, the demand for child care has increased phenomenally during the 1970s. I use the term

"demand" here as the economists do: that is, people not only wanting child-care services, but being prepared to pay for them. Over the last five or six years, there has been an extraordinary growth in for-profit child-care services—clearly indicating that parents who have the money are prepared to pay for the child-care services they want. The services that are growing the most rapidly are those that have been the least available—namely infant and toddler care, and after-school care.

The substantial growth in nursery-school programs is something that is well-documented. In contrast, after-school programs appear to have increased significantly in recent years; but, we have no data with regard to how many there are nationally, and where children of this age now spend most of their time, because this sort of information is not collected on any formal basis. There has been a tremendous surge of interest in infant and toddler care, but no really current data exists on the numbers of these programs either. Interest in employer-sponsored child care has burgeoned in recent years, but very little of it exists.

Thus, the whole question of data, that is, information about where children are and what kinds of services are being provided, is another kind of an issue. Because child care is such a constantly changing and growing phenomenon, the data that we have from the late 1970s often are irrelevant in terms of what child care exists now, promising little assistance for future planning. Yet, no study is being funded that deals in any systematic way with tracking and monitoring where consumers are going for child-care services, what providers exist, and how they are developing and responding to different kinds of demands for services.

Finally, in many ways the most pressing issue of all: should parents be expected to pay the full costs of child care? Or, should a public subsidy be provided? There are many who insist that the problem is not the availability of child-care services, but, in fact, that parents cannot pay for the services that do exist. So the critical issue remains: Should there be a public subsidy provided to help defray the costs of child care? If there is a public subsidy, how much

should it be? For whom should it be provided? How should it be provided? In other words, is it going to be provided to the poor alone? Or the middle class alone, as is the federal child-care tax credit and dependent-care benefit at the present time? How is it going to be provided? As direct cash benefits to families? By direct grants to providers? By tax incentives to providers? By tax benefits to consumers? We are using all of these financing mechanisms at the present time. One question is: How do different types of subsidies affect the ways that child care is provided, the type of care provided, and the access to services?

Issues Change Over Decade

To conclude, although there are some similarities, the issues today are very different from the issues that existed in the child-care field a decade ago. We are no longer debating whether child-care services are good or bad for children, whether it means that parents are abdicating their responsibilities or relinquishing their influence if they are not with their child at every moment of the day. Is there any need for child-care services? With the majority of children growing up in families with working parents, adequate provision of good quality care is essential.

The real problem has to do with the fact that even when we know that good care makes a difference and is important, we are not always sure about how to get such care, and most importantly, we are not yet sure how to pay for good care. So if I were to leave you with a statement of what I think the central issue for child care in the 1980s is, it is a complicated question of: What kind of care? Provided by whom? Located where? Of what quality? For children of what age? At what price? And paid for how?

What type of care? Provided by whom? Located where? For what child? At what age? At what price? Paid for how, or by whom?

Do we expand the amount of care that is available so that people can use the type of care they prefer at a cost that they can afford?

What types of care are available for children of different ages?

Is good care affordable for every child? If not, what can we do about it?

Infant and Toddler Child Care



Care for infants and toddlers is the "greatest unmet need."

Presenter: Robert Lurie, Executive Director Summit Child Care Center, Summit, New Jersey

Robert Lurie characterized child care for infants and toddlers (children aged 0-3 years) as the "greatest unmet need." He attributed the large demand for child-care services to the dramatic and steady increase in the number of working women with children in this age range. Despite this demand, however, the supply of day care for children aged 0 to three has lagged behind the demand or need.

According to Mr. Lurie, this problem of availability of care can be traced to two main factors: the high cost of providing infant and toddler care and providers' reluctance to offer care for this age group due to fears over the complexity and difficulty of offering such care. As a result, in many communities there are not enough day-care slots or a sufficient variety of types of facilities from which parents may choose.

Another major problem highlighted by Mr. Lurie is the issue of affordability or equal access to care for families of all income levels. Many parents are unable to afford the high cost of child care without the help of financial subsidies. However, recent federal budget cutbacks have reduced subsidies to individuals as well as to child-care providers. Consequently, poor and low-income families are often forced to resort to less expensive and lower quality or unsatisfactory arrangements. In light of this problem, Mr. Lurie's center has begun a campaign to raise money to provide financial subsidies for low-income parents.

A third major issue area is the problem of ensuring and regulating the quality of child-care providers and facilities. In discussing this issue, Mr. Lurie pointed to the lack of adequate child-care licensing standards in many states, and the negative effects that low-salaried staff might have on the quality of care which children receive.

In the discussion that followed Mr. Lurie's presentation, several other issues relating to child care for infants and toddlers were raised, including:

- the guilt and fear which parents of very young children experience when they utilize out-of-home child-care services
- the high, and sometimes unrealistic, expectations parents have of what child-care providers should offer their children
- the difficulties parents have in assessing and recognizing what constitutes good quality care
- the lack of general community awareness of the need for infant and toddler child care
- the difficulties faced by providers in dealing with the health problems and frequent illnesses experienced by children in the 0 to three-year-old age range
- the lack of adequate regulations for family day-care homes that exists in many states
- the lack of information available to parents on the location, amount and types of child-care arrangements that exist in their community
- the lack of sufficient data available to researchers and funders on the need and demand for child care and the services that exist





Above, Barbara Washburn, legislative assistant to Senator David Durenberger (R-MN), explains federal child-care tax credits.

Left below, Jan Deering, AJL Public Policy Chairman, contemplates a point.

- the need to expand the availability of paid maternity/paternity leave as an option for parents who may wish to stay at home for a period following the birth of a child, as opposed to using out-of-home child-care facilities
- the problem of the federal child-care tax credit only benefiting people who owe income tax (generally with income levels above \$10,000).

The need, or demand for, infant day care has a direct relationship to the extent that we have paid maternity leaves for women in this country.

Recent federal budget cutbacks have forced many poor and low-income families to cut costs by choosing lower quality care.

Many states have inadequate licensing standards for infant and toddler care.

Paid maternity/paternity leave should be expanded in order to enable more parents to have a choice between staying home and placing their children in out-of-home care.

Pre-School Programs



The inadequate supply of low-cost child care for low-income families is a major problem.

**Presenter: Barbara Bowman, President National Association for the Education of Young Children
Director of Graduate Studies, Erikson Institute**

Barbara Bowman reviewed the trends and developments which have contributed to an increase in the number and variety of child-care programs for pre-school-age children (ages three to five). In 1979, 54 percent of three- to five-year-olds were involved in some type of child care or development program. Included among the factors affecting pre-school care are: an increase in the number of working women of all economic levels with pre-school-age children; the societal acceptance of the fact that experiences in early childhood greatly affect the intellectual, social, emotional and physical development of children; the funding and establishment of "corrective" programs for poor, disadvantaged and handicapped children (e.g., Head Start centers, programs authorized under Title I of the

mandatory kindergarten in the majority of states (87 percent of all children currently are enrolled in kindergarten).

However, despite this increase in the quantity and diversity of programs for pre-school age children, Mrs. Bowman stressed that there is an inadequate supply of low-cost child care for low-income families. She attributed this situation to the high cost of care and cutbacks in federal and state subsidies to providers and parents (such as the Title XX Social Services Block Grant and the Child Care Food Program).

Mrs. Bowman also focused on the issue of persistent low salaries for child-care staff at most facilities. According to Mrs. Bowman, the low salaries of child-care workers have several negative ramifications, including: high staff turnover and the consequent need for program operators to train new staff on a frequent basis, a lack of continuity of care in facilities which experience frequent changes in staff, and the low quality of care that may result from undertrained or



Elementary and Secondary Education Act to assist educationally disadvantaged children in low-income areas), as well as child/parent centers; and the existence of

inexperienced staff. Moreover, inadequate compensation of child-care workers results in the "exploitation" of staff.

In the discussion period, the following additional issues were raised:

- the inability of many facilities to hire a sufficient number of child-care workers due to high operating costs
- the need to challenge funders of child-care programs (e.g., businesses, state agencies) to include more for staff salaries when



In 1979, 54 percent of three-to-five year-olds were involved in some sort of pre-school program.

There has been a sixty percent increase since 1970 in the proportion of pre-school children with working mothers.

Low salaries for child-care staff have a negative effect on the quality of care.

Funders should be challenged to include more money for staff salaries and for hiring more staff.

Fees for child care will increase as the demand for services exceeds the supply.

- determining the initial start-up and operating budgets of programs
- the need to make the public aware of the importance of sufficiently compensating child-care workers
- the probability that, in many areas, fees for child-care programs will increase as the demand for services exceeds the supply
- at the same time, however, programs in communities which are experiencing high unemployment rates may be forced to close as parents who lose their jobs no longer qualify for, or can afford, child-care services
- the potentially adverse emotional problems children may experience when taken out of care.

Above, Anne Hoover, AJL Second Vice President, and Juliet Rowland, member, AJL Public Policy Committee, chair Agenda for Action strategy session.

Left below, Cynthia Haskins of the Junior League of Kingsport, Tennessee, listens to a presentation.

Care for School-Age Children



There is a lack of any real "givens" as to how programs for school-age children should be organized or structured and what services should be offered.

Presenter: Andrea Genser, Project Associate, School-Age Child Care Project Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, Wellesley College

Child care for school-age children (ages six-13) is another service which is in great demand as more and more women are participating in the labor force. In 1981, 57 percent of children six to 13 years of age had mothers who were working. In her presentation on child care for school-age children, Andrea Genser underlined the insufficient availability of programs in most communities to meet this demand or need. As a consequence, many children are left unsupervised or improperly supervised for long periods of time before and after regular school hours, as well as when schools are not in session. Moreover, when programs do exist they are often too expensive for many parents to afford.

In addition to the problems of availability and affordability, Miss Genser also discussed the issue of quality of care as it relates to care for school-age children. More specifically, she pointed to the lack of any real "givens" as to how such programs should be organized or structured and what services should be offered. As an example, some programs involve formally-organized recreational and crafts activities, while others merely serve as a loosely-supervised meeting place for the children. The question of the quality of the child-care workers is integrally related to the issue of the quality and type of services offered at existing programs.

Besides availability, affordability, and quality, Miss Genser also discussed the issue of the sponsorship and location of child-care programs for school-age children. Public school districts in a great many communities are letting their facilities be used for child-care programs at times when regular classes are not being held. This use of school buildings has the advantage of providing the public school system with an additional source of revenue, as well as being convenient for those parents with children who attend a school in which child care is offered.

However, the location of school-age child-care programs in school facilities has several disadvantages, including: overcrowding in buildings that are used for a variety of purposes at the same time; requiring children to stay at school all day; and being inconvenient for parents with children who attend different schools.

The following other issues were raised in the discussion period:

- the problem of children having to transfer to different child-care programs as they get older
- the particular lack of a sufficient number of programs that begin before the start of the school day and that are open after 5:00 p.m.
- the problem of transporting children from school to child-care programs that are not located in schools—this problem is particularly acute in rural areas
- the difficulty of designing programs and activities to meet the needs and interests of children of different ages within the broad age range of six to 13
- the present inability of school-age child-care programs to qualify for non-profit tax-exempt status
- the lack of sufficient standards and regulations for school-age programs in several states
- liability and legal issues that stem from caring for children.

Information and Referral Services



Most information and referral services are based on the premise that parents can make the best choice for their children.

**Presenter: Patty Siegel, Executive Director
California Child Care Resource and
Referral Network**

Patty Siegel emphasized the importance of information and referral (also known as resource and referral) services as a strategy for addressing some of the issues and problems in child care identified by the conference presenters and participants. She stressed that information and referral services can greatly increase parental choice of child-care arrangements by helping parents define or clarify their child-care needs, providing advice about the characteristics of a variety of programs, and identifying services or facilities which meet parents' needs and financial situations.

Most information and referral programs, she said, are based on the premise that parents can make the best choices for their children. She pointed out that information and referral programs do not place children; their function is to provide information to assist parents in making informed decisions. Because this service can be provided free or at very low cost, it is available to people of every income level.

In addition to assisting parents, information and referral services can also help in the gathering of data on the programs or resources available in a community and on the needs and preferences of families. This information can be used for planning to address service gaps that are identified and for educating the community about the importance of obtaining private and public sector financing, as well as building community support for child care.

Many information and referral services also provide technical assistance to potential and existing providers.

Questions raised during the discussion period included:

- Does a referral to a particular child-care program imply that the information and referral service approves of the program?
- How should information and referral services respond to complaints from parents about the programs to which they have been referred?
- What are the legal liabilities an information and referral program might incur if it uses subjective criteria for evaluating child-care programs?

Children's interests change as they grow older. It is very difficult to structure activities to meet the needs and interests of children within the broad age range of six to thirteen.

In 1981, fifty-seven percent of children six to thirteen years of age had mothers who were working.

Information and referral is a service that can be provided free or at very low cost to every income level.

Information and referral services can greatly increase parental choice of child-care arrangements.

Financing and Delivery of Services

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Federal Government
Panelist: Susanne Martinez
Legislative Assistant to Senator Alan Cranston (D-CA)

Susanne Martinez addressed the federal role in financing and supporting child-care services. She pointed out that there has been and still is a lack of unified federal or national policy in the area of child care. Although several funding programs have developed in different segments of the federal social service and income support systems, there is little consistency among them in terms of administration, eligibility requirements and purpose. She attributed this situation in part to the fact that child care has been a low-priority item on the national policy agenda, despite the pervasiveness of rhetoric in support of children. Moreover, the belief within the Nixon and Carter Administrations that the federal government should stay out of the business of supporting child care because it is "anti-family" still persists today.

She also stressed that the maze of existing subsidy programs for child care has resulted in a two-tier system. Programs and provisions such as the Title XX Social Services Block Grant and the child-care deduction allowed recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) benefits have provided poor and disadvantaged families with financial subsidies for care. At the same time, the federal income tax credit for dependent-care expenses has given middle- and upper-income families an indirect subsidy. However, the working poor (those with incomes between \$10,000 and \$20,000) receive little assistance; their incomes are too high to qualify for means-tested programs, and too low to benefit from a tax credit that is linked to the amount of income tax owed.

The budget cuts proposed by President Reagan in such programs as AFDC, the Social Services Block Grant and the Child Care Food Program are likely to exacerbate this situation. The effect of the proposed cuts would be to make a greater proportion of the working poor ineligible for benefit assistance and in-kind services such as child care. Moreover, reductions in existing benefit programs would also reduce the level of assistance to the poor.

Susanne Martinez ended her presentation with several suggestions for action, including: working to protect existing levels of assistance to the poor and disadvantaged; advocating for expansion of the sliding scale tax credit and for making the credit refundable (these changes would enable lower-income people to benefit from the credit); encouraging the expansion of incentives to businesses to finance and support child-care services for their employees and others in the community; and developing collaboration between the private and public sectors on developing ways to make child care affordable for all income levels.

2

State Government
Panelist: Florence Glasser, Policy Adviser
North Carolina Department of Administration, Office of Policy and Planning

Florence Glasser discussed ways in which state government can finance, develop and promote child-care services. She stressed that the role of the states in supporting child-care programs is becoming increasingly more important as the federal government is transferring responsibility for social and human service program areas over to the states.

She reviewed major legislation relating to child care that has been enacted and implemented by the State of North Carolina in the past five years. In 1977, with the support of Governor Hunt, the New Generation Act was passed by the legislature. This bill established a mandate and structure for inter-agency cooperation and coordination

on conducting a statewide needs assessment for child-care services. In 1979, legislation was passed which appropriated funds for start-up and operating costs for child-care programs. The intention of the bill's provisions was to make child care more affordable for low-income families. In addition, more money was appropriated for enforcing state licensing requirements and regulations.

Her presentation concluded with the recommendation that advocates turn some of their attention to exploring ways in which their states can expand upon their role in financing and supporting child-care services. In addition, she suggested that businesses should be given incentives (such as through the state tax system) to provide child-care services and flexible benefits (such as paid maternity leave or job sharing) for their employees.

3

Corporate Sector

**Panelist: Gwen Morgan, Lecturer
Wheelock College, Boston, Massachusetts**

Gwen Morgan's presentation dealt with the ways in which employers (e.g., small profit-making businesses, middle- and large-size corporations, not-for-profit institutions) can address the child-care needs of their employees. She traced the growing employer interest in the area of child care to the benefits they experience in increased worker productivity and satisfaction when the child-care needs of employees are taken care of, as well as to the tax incentive provisions which were included in the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981.

Mrs. Morgan listed possible ways in which businesses can help meet the child-care needs of their workers, including: establishing a child-care center at the work-site; purchasing slots for their employees at existing facilities; providing workers with vouchers or cash to help pay for child care;

giving donations or in-kind services (such as technical assistance or loaned staff time) to community programs; and establishing or supporting information and referral services to assist employees in locating child care. Many businesses have chosen alternative approaches to on-site centers because the experience of companies that have set up such facilities has revealed a reluctance on the part of workers to utilize care provided at the workplace.

Mrs. Morgan also discussed ways in which businesses have begun to adjust their personnel policies to assist workers in fulfilling their child-care responsibilities more easily. Examples of this approach include: "flex-time" or flexible work hours, job sharing, expanding possibilities for part-time employment, providing paid maternity and/or paternity leave. In some cases, these options are offered to employees along with other types of benefits in the form of a package or "cafeteria plan" from which workers may choose benefits that meet their individual needs.

Mrs. Morgan concluded by advising advocates to encourage businesses of all sizes to offer child-care assistance to their workers, rather than continue to focus on the involvement of large corporations. In her view, meetings should be held with local and state Chambers of Commerce in order to encourage them to educate their member businesses on the tax and other advantages of providing child-care services.

4

Proprietary Sector

**Panelist: Robert S. Benson, Vice President
National Association for Child Care
Management and President, Children's
World, Inc.**

Robert Benson began his presentation by stressing that, over the next ten years, the focus of child-care advocates and providers should be on making child care (especially for pre-school-age children) affordable for parents of all income levels, and on devising strategies to generate a

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sufficient supply of facilities to meet the growing demand for child care.

According to Mr. Benson, accomplishing these objectives will be difficult in light of recently enacted and proposed federal budget cutbacks.

Although advocates and providers still need to look to the federal government to address the problem of availability of child care, increasing attention will have to be paid to the role and support of the private sector. Specifically, Mr. Benson mentioned businesses as important sources of support for expanding the supply of child-care centers and other facilities. He stressed the importance of tapping this resource despite the fact that the private sector will not be able to make up the expected loss in federal and state aid. Along slightly different lines, he also suggested that groups such as Junior Leagues should encourage banks and other lending institutions to offer favorable mortgage terms for child-care facilities.

As to the issue of affordability of child care, Mr. Benson stressed the importance of advocating for the expansion of the sliding scale tax credit for child-care expenses, and for refundability of this tax credit. Both changes would assist a greater number of parents in paying for child-care expenses on their own. Tax credits are likely to become more important as the level of direct federal subsidies to parents and providers is reduced.

Mr. Benson stressed the importance and value of the proprietary sector's role in delivering child-care services. The proprietary agency, which he heads, currently provides services to 11,000 children. According to Mr. Benson, the managerial and training

talents of proprietary agencies can be used to help businesses offer services to meet the child-care needs of their employees. In the realm of advocacy, proprietary operators have worked through their trade association in support of expanding the tax credit for child-care expenses.

Mr. Benson concluded by asserting that there is no "single proprietary sector view on child-care public policy." That is, there is as much of a diversity of views among proprietary operators as there is among non-profit operators. Similarly, there is a wide spectrum of types of providers in the for-profit sector.

In Mr. Benson's view: "We need to put aside simple labels and form coalitions around issues."

**5
Voluntary Sector
Panelist: Evelyn K. Moore
Executive Director
National Black Child Development
Institute, Inc.**

The final panelist, Evelyn Moore, addressed the role of the not-for-profit voluntary sector in delivering child-care services. Currently, 59 percent of child-care centers are operated on a non-profit basis. These centers play a vital part in providing care to children from poor and low-income families—84 percent of children from families with incomes of less than \$6,000 receive child care from this type of facility.

Moreover, child-care facilities operated by the voluntary sector have contributed to the expansion of parental involvement in the activities and services of the programs which their children attend. Non-profit programs have established voluntary advisory panels as a vehicle for citizen participation in the delivery of child-care services.

Despite its importance, however, Miss Moore said the voluntary sector is in danger of becoming extinct. The precarious situation of non-profit agencies stems from their heavy reliance on federal financial assistance. As government funding and involvement with social services are being reduced, these programs are forced to look to other means of support to finance their operating costs as well as subsidize families who cannot afford to pay the full cost of care.

Miss Moore stressed the need to advocate for expanding the federal sliding scale tax credit for dependent-care expenses, and making the credit refundable. In her view, such action would enable families who traditionally rely on direct federal subsidies to pay for a greater proportion of the cost of child-care expenses on their own. She also pointed to the importance of opposing further cuts in appropriations for the Title XX Social Services Block Grant, Head Start and other programs that are designed to aid poor and disadvantaged children.

Agenda for Action

In the final session of the conference, the participants formulated action strategies to address five major issues which emerged from the presentations and discussions as being of primary concern to the participants. What follows is a listing of these issues and an outline of the suggested action strategies for each issue. Depending on the strategy, action may be taken at the local, state or national level or at a combination of all.

Issue #1-Affordability of Child Care (equality of access)

The following strategies are based on the premises that quality child care should be affordable to families of all income levels and funding for child-care services should not result in a "two-tier system" in which good quality care is available only for those who can pay the full cost of care.

Strategies

- Work for the expansion of the federal sliding scale tax credit for dependent-care expenses. **N**
- Support efforts to make the federal tax credit refundable (i.e., provide a cash refund for child-care expenses to those people who do not owe any income tax because their incomes are too low). **N**
- Support adequate funding for the Child Care Food Program. **N**
- Work to reverse changes in the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981 that limited the permissible expenditure for child care and restricted the use of the earned income disregard for AFDC recipients to only four months. **N**
- Oppose cutbacks in Head Start and programs authorized under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. **N**
- Oppose further reductions in the funding level for the Title XX Social Services Block Grant. **N**
- Oppose efforts to make workfare a requirement in all states for AFDC recipients, including mothers with young children. **N**
- Work to establish continuity and consistency in eligibility requirements for federally-subsidized programs. **S N**

- Make the public aware of the importance of child-care programs and the need for adequate funding for those services. **L S N**
- Build coalitions to support adequate funding of child-care programs. **L S N**
- Advocate for strong licensing requirements for child-care facilities and adequate funding for the enforcement of standards. **L S N**
- Solicit funds or grants from foundations to fund child-care programs. **L S N**
- Encourage businesses to support child-care programs and provide flexible benefits for employees. **L S N**
- Support passage of supplementary state funding for support of child-care services and encourage state governments to continue to appropriate funds equal to the amounts formerly required to match federal Title XX allocations to the state. **S**
- Advocate for the addition of a tax credit for child-care expenses in the state personal income tax. **S**
- Endorse the enactment of tax incentives to businesses to support child-care services. **S**
- Support establishment of paid maternity/paternity benefits as part of statewide temporary disability insurance. **S**
- Support use of public education funds and facilities for child-care services for school-age children. **L S**
- Conduct fundraising campaigns within the community and encourage local United Ways to provide funds for child care. **L**

N-national
S-state
L-local

Issue #2-Availability of Child Care

The issue of availability relates to the problem of an inadequate supply of child-care services, as well as an insufficient variety of options for care from which parents may choose. These problems stem from an

inadequate level of government and other funding for child care.

Strategies

- Oppose proposals to reduce the level of Title XX Social Services Block Grant appropriations. **N**
- Conduct media campaigns to raise public consciousness on the need for expanding the level of child-care services. **L S N**
- Build coalitions to work for increased funding and public support for child care. **L S N**
- Encourage more private-public sector collaborations. **L S N**
- Support funding for information and referral services to provide parents with information on services that are available in their community, as well as to give service providers data on the needs of parents. **L S N**
- Conduct a needs assessment to determine what the child-care needs of families are and what services exist to meet these needs. **L S**

Issue #3-Delivery of Services, Types of Providers

The conference participants reached consensus that efforts should be directed towards improving upon the existing delivery system, rather than establishing a new one. Thus, the following strategies address the question of how to reduce the fragmentation of the system to establish a comprehensive network.

Strategies

- Encourage efforts to make use of existing services and to inform consumers of their existence. **L S**
- Build coalitions among providers to increase communication and collaboration. **L S**
- Introduce new models for programs and methods of delivering services that involve integration of existing programs. **L S**
- Establish incentives for providers to become a formal part of the delivery system (i.e., become licensed child-care providers). **L S**

Issue #4-Quality of Child-Care Services

This issue relates to the quality of the services that are provided to children. Factors that affect the quality of services include: the salary of staff; the level of skills, experience and training of staff; the number of staff and size of groups; the nature of the licensing requirements that a provider must meet in order to become a licensed provider; and the degree to which these licensing requirements are enforced.

Strategies

- Establish licensing regulations and standards for providers in states in which they do not already exist (e.g., infant care, family day care). **S**
- Support adequate enforcement of standards and regulations. **L S**
- Strengthen existing regulations for licensing of providers, where appropriate. **L S**
- Train family day-care providers on the requirements and means for becoming licensed child-care providers. **L S**

Issue #5-Public Education

The issue of public education has two dimensions. The first concerns educating parents on the availability of services in their communities, and helping them acquire skills for assessing the level of quality of programs and the type of program which they would prefer to utilize (e.g., center or family day-care home). The second aspect of public education involves educating the community as a whole on the need for expanding the supply of existing child-care services, increasing the level of funding for child care and ensuring that good quality care is available for families of all income levels. The latter aspect of public education is considered important because political leaders and businesses react to the level of public support which they feel exists for a service.

Strategies

- Encourage the development of media campaigns to inform the public about the value and need for child-care programs, and the need for an increased level of government and private funding for programs and services. **L S N**

- Enlist key leaders and advocates in support of providing good quality, affordable child care. **L S N**
- Encourage collaboration among advocates and providers in order to develop a strong constituency for child care. **L S N**
- Establish and support information and referral services to assist parents in choosing child-care programs. **L S**
- Assist parents in assessing the quality of programs and in choosing the type of program which best suits their children. **L S**

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